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NATURALIZED PLANTS TO DIMINISH HUNGARIAN IMPORTS

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Efforts to modernize Hungarian agriculture with a view to increasing the country's self-sufficiency resulted in three important developments during 1950: (1) experiments were conducted with industrial plants to determine production methods and the varieties best suited to Hungary's soil and climate; (2) sufficient seed was secured to permit quantity production of these plants; and (3) it was demonstrated, in practice, that certain plants, which the bourgeois experts had considered "unprofitable" in central and southeastern Europe, could be naturalized in Hungary.

Hungary imported relatively large amounts of industrial plants before the war, as follows:

	Imports	
	1938	1939
	(million pengos)	
Cotton	22.6	23.6
Cotton yarn	2.4	2.1
Jute	1.7	2.6
Crude rubber	3.2	3.3
Rice	4.8	7.3
Totals	34.7	38.9
Total imports	410.6	489.9

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/Corresponding figures for 1947, in million forints, are:

Cotton	226.6
Jute	6.8
Crude rubber	7.6
Rice	10.3
Total	251.3
Total imports	1,458.8

/Statistics from Magyar Statisztikai Zsebkonyv (Hungarian Statistical Manual) 1948, page 136, published by Magyar Kozponti Statisztikai Hivatal (Hungarian Central Statistical Office). Official rates of exchange: one pengo equals .175 dollar and one forint equals .085 dollar./

The best results were achieved in the naturalization of rice. The quantity imported in 1939 could have been grown on 10,000 cadastral yokes. Experiments with rice were begun at Szeged 3 years ago and in 1950 over 24,000 cadastral yokes were planted in rice, yielding an average of 20 quintals per cadastral yoke, while some of the state farms and producers' cooperatives achieved as much as 40 quintals per cadastral yoke. In other words, double the quantity required for domestic consumption was produced in 1950, leaving a surplus for industrial use and export.

Aided by the irrigation projects under the Five-Year Plan, rice production should continue to increase during the next 4 years. Its importance is heightened by the fact that alkaline soil, which was estimated at 626,000 cadastral yokes in Hungary in 1936, and which is unsuitable for other plants, is being used for the growing of rice.

Next to rice, cotton has given the best results among the naturalized plants in Hungary. Prior to 1945, experts were unanimous in the opinion that cotton could not be adapted to the soil of Hungary, because "poor-yielding varieties, if planted early and protected against the May frost, may mature, but are usually ruined by the September rains. Therefore, cotton production in Hungary is unprofitable, in fact, it may result in large losses." This view was based on the wrong Mendel-Morgan genetics, which was unable to develop a plant of short maturity and rich yield. The bourgeois experts were not familiar with Lysenko's theory on heredity and mutation.

In 1950, 10,500 cadastral yokes were planted in cotton in Hungary, instead of the 3,000 cadastral yokes envisaged by the Five-Year Plan. The acreage will be increased to 50,000 cadastral yokes in 1951 and probably to 100,000 cadastral yokes in 1952.

Hungary's cotton production is still in its infancy and the average yield did not exceed 3 quintals per cadastral yoke in 1950, as compared with 9 quintals per cadastral yoke (18.4 quintals per hectare) in the Soviet Union under the 1945 - 1950 Five-Year Plan. However, the task of the first year of the Hungarian Five-Year Plan was fulfilled by the introduction of quantity production.

Cotton production on 100,000 cadastral yokes would, at the present yield, assure 40 percent of the 1938 requirements. It is, however, probable that continued experimentation, with concomitant improvement in quality, will raise the average yield above 3 quintals per cadastral yoke. Moreover, the 1954 goal of 100,000 cadastral yokes should be realized earlier. The actual 1950 acreage of 10,500 cadastral yokes compared with 3,000 cadastral yokes originally planned

and the 1951-52 estimate of 50,000 cadastral yokes will be attained in the current 1950-51 season. It is, therefore, probable that 100,000 cadastral yokes will be under cotton as early as 1951-52. Another favorable factor is that the right price has been established relative to production costs. Prices per quintal of unginned cotton are 800 forints for first grade, 700 forints for second grade, and 400 forints for third-grade cotton, while production costs are estimated at 1,400 forints per cadastral yoke.

Cultivation of the new plants, while it requires more work, special skill, and larger investment, is much more profitable both for the producer and the national economy than grain production. For this reason, every effort must be made to realize one of the goals of the Five-Year Plan, increased cultivation of industrial plants, such as the new rubber and fibrous plants, as well as of vegetables, at the expense of grain acreage.

The new rubber and fibrous plants are still in the experimental stage in Hungary. It is certain, however, that these plants will also go into quantity production in the near future, some of them as early as next spring.

The most important plant in this category is the Kirgiz kok-sagyz, which yields 60 to 200 kilograms of rubber per hectare. Experiments are being conducted to increase the rubber yield both in quality and quantity by improving the wild variety, a native of alkaline or marshy soil. As a steppe plant, the kok-sagyz has several favorable properties: it is frost- and drought-resistant and grows on any soil.

At a yield of 60 to 200 kilograms per hectare; a total acreage of 161,130 to 537,100 cadastral yokes would produce the 32,226 quintals of rubber which Hungary imported in 1938. However, experiments employing the Michurin-Lysenko methods may be relied upon to produce a better yield next year when the kok-sagyz will go into quantity production.

Experiments are also being conducted with kenaf, a jute substitute, which has a higher yield than hemp. The kenaf may be grown on soil which is unsuitable for hemp, thus enabling Hungarian agriculture to use poorer soils for the production of valuable plants.

Quantity production of kenaf is to begin in the spring of 1951. According to preliminary estimates, the kenaf yield will equal the average yield of hemp, that is, 40 quintals of stalk per cadastral yoke. Since the kenaf stalk, like the hemp stalk, yields approximately 17 percent fiber, the 59,078 quintals of crude fiber, representing Hungary's 1938 jute import, will require 8,700-10,000 cadastral yokes of kenaf.

Two other fibrous plants, the ramie and the yucca, may be mentioned, although their production in quantity is still in the distant future. Certain yucca varieties have thrived in Hungarian gardens as decorative plants for centuries. Neither of the two plants requires a special kind of soil. Their naturalization, however, presents problems of propagation.

In evaluating the promising beginnings, the difficulties arising out of industrial research and processing techniques must not be glossed over. Hungary does not yet possess either experience or specialized machines which would permit the industrial utilization of kok-sagyz, kenaf, ramie, and yucca. This is true of the agricultural aspect of these plants also, since special machines are required for their production in quantity. Despite successes in experimental work, a considerable amount of investments and of organization will be necessary to produce tangible results. For this reason, economy and productivity, on the one hand, and further paring down of production and administration costs, on the other, must be stressed both in agriculture and industry.

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